



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Washington, D.C. 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:

DIRECTOR'S ORDER NO. 180

Subject: Financial Planning Services

Sec. 1 What is the purpose of this Order? This Order establishes Fish and Wildlife Service policy and procedures for the reimbursement of costs associated with individual financial planning services as part of the Service's retirement education program. This program will help employees plan for their retirement and make the best use of the benefit programs available to them.

Sec. 2 What is the authority for this action? Comptroller General Decision B-301721, January 16, 2004.

Sec. 3 To whom does this Order apply? This policy applies to all permanent Service employees.

Sec. 4 What are financial planning services? Financial planning services are advice and consultation services on investments, retirement issues, and benefit programs sought by an employee from a financial planner of his/her choice.

Sec. 5 What is the Service's policy on reimbursing the costs associated with individual financial planning services? In an effort to educate employees about retirement issues and benefit programs available to them, we will reimburse 50 percent of an employee's financial planning services expenses up to \$200. Employees may receive this benefit only once every 3 years. Additionally, employees may receive this benefit within 12 months of retirement or other voluntary separation from the Service, regardless of the 3-year limit. If that retirement or voluntary separation does not occur within 12 months and the employee is not on the third year of the cycle, then the employee must return the reimbursement.

Sec. 6 What financial planning services do I use? To qualify for reimbursement, a certified financial planner must provide the financial planning services. Financial planning services are a personal decision. You are responsible for choosing a certified financial planner that you are comfortable with and for any decisions you make based on that advice. We will not endorse or recommend a financial planning services provider.

Sec. 7 Can I use official time to seek financial planning services? No, you must seek financial planning services during your own time, such as before and after normal work hours.

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Sec. 8 How do I obtain reimbursement? After you receive the services, complete FWS Form 3-2304 (Application for Reimbursement of Financial Planning Services), FWS Form 3-2305 (Certification of Usage), and FWS Form 3-2306 (Report of Taxable Fringe Benefit (Financial Planning Services Reimbursement)). You must provide these forms and proof of payment in full to your supervisor for approval. If you are utilizing this benefit within 12 months of retirement or other voluntary separation, you must also provide your supervisor a signed statement indicating your expected date of retirement/voluntary separation.

Sec. 9 What will my supervisor do with these documents? After approval, your supervisor will maintain FWS Forms 3-2304 and 3-2305, the original proof of payment, and any written statement of retirement/voluntary separation in his/her files. He/she will forward FWS Form 3-2306 to the National Business Center at the address on the form.

Sec. 10 Who is responsible for monitoring my participation in the program? It is both your and your supervisor's responsibility to track your participation in the program and eligibility for reimbursement. Falsely certifying usage will lead to your (a) immediate removal from participation in the program without reimbursement for any expenses already incurred, and (b) repayment of any reimbursement received. It may also result in disciplinary action.

Sec. 11 How will I receive reimbursement? Payment will be made through the Federal Personnel and Payroll System and will be included in your salary payment. The amount reimbursed to you is a taxable benefit and will be reported as such to the Internal Revenue Service. In addition, the payroll office will compute associated assessments for Federal, FICA, Medicare, State, and local taxes.

Sec. 12 When is this Order effective? This Order is effective immediately. We will incorporate its contents into the Fish and Wildlife Service Manual. This Order will expire on December 31, 2005, unless it is amended, superseded, or revoked.


Deputy
DIRECTOR

Date: November 18, 2004